

## State Commission

Volunteer Iowa uses innovative approaches, including national service, to address our state's needs through service and volunteerism. Volunteer Iowa manages 23 AmeriCorps State programs with 850 members, serving all 99 Iowa counties. In 2015, Volunteer Iowa built on Governor's National Service Council work to engage Iowans in service, focusing on effective volunteer management and promotion. Through the Iowa Mentoring Partnership, the commission supports 70 certified, high quality youth mentoring programs, with a new emphasis on STEM mentoring. Under the Volunteer Generation Fund, Volunteer Iowa launched the Employer Volunteer Initiative (EVI) and implemented a statewide Service Enterprise program. EVI educates business about the benefits of volunteerism and challenges companies to track and report volunteer hours. Over six weeks, this program generated more than 41,000 volunteer hours and Governor's recognition for three top businesses. Iowa's Service Enterprise program increases capacity for organizations to effectively engage volunteers. Volunteer Iowa is the country's first government agency certified as a Service Enterprise and has leveraged 1,284 skilled volunteer hours, a \$25,680 value.

## AmeriCorps State

Iowa Legal Aid AmeriCorps members give high-quality, free legal services to low-income Iowans in non-criminal matters that most dramatically impact their lives. Members serve low-income Iowans in each of the state's 99 counties. They have helped Iowans avoid homelessness, maintain their income, and stay safe. AmeriCorps members make community legal education presentations, help new clients enter the support system; interpret and translate; and manage volunteers. They help low-income residents who are elderly or who have disabilities complete rent reimbursement benefits claims. In the first half of 2015, clients who had help from AmeriCorps members to complete these applications received an average benefit of \$705, and were able to use this to meet immediate, basic needs and avoid potential future legal problems. In the past year, members coordinated 64 self-help divorce clinics, with the help of volunteer attorneys, law students, and paralegals. These volunteers donated 376 hours of their time, with a value of more than \$17,000.

The Des Moines Public Schools AmeriCorps Program supports the district's initiative to improve academic performance and engagement in order to increase future high school graduation rates. Trained AmeriCorps members tutor district students in literacy and math in 30 elementary buildings. They coordinate a program in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Iowa that helps sixth graders successfully transition to middle school. Through the Pathways to Success program, AmeriCorps members help students stay engaged in school by mentoring them about career and educational opportunities. Members partner with Community Youth Concepts to give students evidence-based service-learning programs that increase student engagement. The district's AmeriCorps members run summer programs to help students maintain the previous year's academic gains. Members also help District Volunteer Coordinator to engage volunteers at the building level so that the whole Des Moines community stays actively involved in student success.

## AmeriCorps National

FoodCorps has nine AmeriCorps members serving in Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Decorah, Des Moines, Oelwein, Ottumwa, and Waterloo, Iowa. FoodCorps is a nationwide team of AmeriCorps leaders who work under the direction of local partner organizations to connect children to real food and help them grow up healthy. They teach children hands-on lessons about food and nutrition build and tend school gardens, teach cooking lessons, and help change what's on lunch trays so that children can eat healthy food from local farms. In the past year, the FoodCorps members in Iowa served 16,797 children, built or brought back into use 13 school and community gardens, harvested 1,281 pounds of produce, and recruited 296 community volunteers.

## AmeriCorps VISTA

The Iowa College Student Aid Commission sponsors the College Changes Everything AmeriCorps VISTA program. Ben Thorp, one of the AmeriCorps VISTAs, has provided valuable support for the College Application Campaign in Council Bluffs. As a result of his efforts, 852 students participated in ten College Application Campaign sessions and they completed 730 college applications. Additionally, Ben's efforts around FAFSA completion resulted in six workshops that provided assistance to 162 students completing FAFSA and answering financial aid questions. Data shows that 53 students started or completed the FAFSA during these workshops. Ben served at the Council Bluffs Community School District and was also instrumental in establishing an infrastructure for a new scholarship program for district students. The Pottawattamie Promise Scholarship program is funded by a local foundation and makes tuition, room, and board free to low-income students who show the motivation and need for a college support program. Ben has worked with district administrators and counselors to select students and build the components of the program.

# National Service Impact in Iowa



Shelter House Community Shelter and Transition Services is the only emergency shelter in Iowa City. A five member AmeriCorps VISTA team began in 2014 at the Shelter House Economic Opportunity VISTA Program. In the first year the program not only recruited 76 volunteers who served 1,748 hours, doubling hours contributed, but also made important long term contributions for the shelter and the community. This is seen in a promotional video created by one of the team members that has been viewed nearly 400 times by community members, funders, potential clients, and partnering organizations. The video informs viewers about the Fairweather Lodge program. Another team member helped a local housing nonprofit organize a bus tour of successful affordable housing developments in order to help dispel myths about affordable housing. Local officials, land owners, and businesspeople attended the tour, which was also covered by local media. The team has also raised \$13,750 to assist with the homeless programs conducted at Shelter House.

## AmeriCorps NCCC

In partnership with Camp Albrecht Acres, an AmeriCorps NCCC team supported camp counselors serving campers with special needs. Camp Albrecht Acres, located in Sherrill, provides a unique environment for people with special needs. Each member was paired with one to four campers each week and took their campers through daily programming. Programming included arts and crafts, sports, and a large group activity in the evening. Each team member participated in activities with their campers and helped adapt them to their ability level. The team also assisted in primary care of the campers including bathing, dressing, feeding, and nighttime care. Members worked with a total of 386 campers during the five weeks of residential camp. At the conclusion of the residential camp, members also took part in a two-week day camp for children with autism, called Camp Bee-A-Friend. During this time, each team member was paired with either an individual or small group of campers to take through the day's activities. Members worked with 110 campers, and the camp was the highlight of their summer.

The Iowa Valley Habitat for Humanity requested an AmeriCorps NCCC team to construct, gut, and rehab homes for qualifying low-income families. The organization is dedicated to eliminating substandard housing locally and worldwide through constructing, rehabilitating, and preserving homes, by advocating for fair and just housing policies, and by providing training and access to resources to help families improve their shelter conditions. The first site members worked on was a rehabilitation of an existing home in Tipton. The team assisted with weatherizing an attic, completing siding, constructing and painting walls for a garage, and installing a deck. In Iowa City, members helped build a home from a cement slab to a towering exterior structure. In Coralville, the team rehabbed another home by removing and disposing of the original carpets, windows, roof, and old appliances. Additionally, the team demolished moldy walls, an old deck and weatherized an attic. Afterwards, the team installed new windows, a new roof, new drywall and electrical outlets. The work of the team allowed the sponsor to get ahead of the tasks for the summer and more time for future homes.

## Social Innovation Fund

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) transforms lives by using evidence to find what works and make it work for more people. The SIF Classic and SIF Pay for Success programs harness the expertise of grant-making intermediaries to identify, evaluate and expand effective nonprofits serving low-income communities across America. Central Iowa Works Funding Collaborative is leading these efforts by leveraging meaningful workforce partnerships within the health care, energy and financial services sectors to help Iowans attain economic opportunity. The Social Innovation Fund is investing in expanding the impact of one nonprofit in Iowa.

## Volunteer Generation Fund

The Volunteer Generation Fund has increased Iowa's volunteer infrastructure by supporting the start-up and expansion of Volunteer Centers, providing training and technical assistance in volunteer management best practices and utilization of volunteers to meet community need, implementing Service Enterprise statewide, and developing the Employer Volunteer Initiative. A subgrantee, Big River United Way Volunteer Center in Keokuk, is utilizing volunteerism to increase youth literacy. The Literacy Project Committee is run by skill-based volunteers who recruit, train, and supervise other volunteers to read and provide evidence-based literacy activities to children. During the 2014-15 school year, 44 volunteers, including employees of business partners, worked with 47 students, contributing 1,058 hours of volunteer service. The program also includes a summer component, Reach Out and Read, held three days a week during the school district's summer lunch program to prevent summer slide. For the 2016-17 school year the program will expand to serve Pre-K through 3rd grade students in three area schools. A planning manual is under development to help additional area schools replicate the program.